

National Conversation on Sexual Assault
USNA, Annapolis, MD
4 April 2019

Secretary Esper, welcome to Annapolis. Superintendent Carter, thank you for hosting us. And to all the distinguished University and College leaders here today, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules for this critical discussion.

I wish I could say I'm happy to be here today, but the fact is I am not. I am very concerned about the ongoing scourge of sexual assault and sexual harassment on America's campuses, and I am frustrated at the need for this discussion.

The fact that you are present today highlights that you must share my frustration. I know you are as committed to the safety of your students as we are to ours. I know that you share my resolve that no student, military or civilian, undergraduate or graduate, should ever fear for their physical safety, nor should they have to fight for basic dignity while pursuing a degree of higher learning. And I am certain I can trust you all to bring what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called "the fierce urgency of now" to this effort.

In order to eliminate this scourge from the American campus, we must continuously re-evaluate our prevention approaches and continuously develop, share and implement new ideas. I am grateful for the incredible array of experts in this room today, and I'm certain their insights will prove valuable to us all.

I also know that every education leader in this room has unique perspectives, best practices, and innovative approaches that can benefit all of our students. So please speak up during this national discussion, and take an active role over the next two days and in the weeks and months to follow.

The theme of this event is Better People. Better Leaders. Better Nation. That's a responsibility we all share. Engaged leadership is one of the greatest tools in our fight against sexual assault and sexual harassment. And that begins at the top.

That's why Secretary Esper, Secretary Wilson, and I have signed a personal commitment to share evidence-based prevention practices and data, to identify the factors and behaviors that drive sexual misconduct, and to develop partnerships to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment. We look to you to commit your institutions to join us in these efforts to irradiate this cancer.

We hope you'll join us in this collective effort, and stay engaged in this effort to provide our students and their families the safe and healthy learning environment they have a fundamental right to expect from us all.

So I want to thank you once again for being here and I look forward to working with each of you on this critical effort.

Thank you.